

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently amended) A fuel filter comprising

[[a]] **an elongated flat** filter housing **having a longitudinal axis, at least first and second longitudinally extending side walls, and opposing ends extending vertically to the longitudinal axis,**

at least one substantially elongated flat filter element contained in the housing, the at least one substantially flat filter element being embodied overall as planar or flat in shape having a clean side and a dirty side which are both substantially planar and are situated essentially parallel to each other, the clean side being disposed between a first elongated surface of the flat filter element and [[a]] **the** first side **wall** of the housing, and the dirty side being disposed between a second elongated surface of the flat filter element and [[a]] **the** second side **wall** of the housing, which second elongated surface opposes the first elongated surface,

a fuel inlet **provided on an end of the housing** delivering fuel to be filtered into the housing and a fuel outlet **provided on an end of the housing** delivering filtered fuel from the housing, [[and]]

at least one wall encapsulating the clean side ~~or the dirty side~~ of the filter element, the at least one **encapsulating** wall being disposed between ~~[[that]]~~ **the clean** side of the filter element and **the first side wall of** the filter housing, wherein the filter element and the at least one **encapsulating** wall together constitute a filter insert which is inserted into the housing ~~[[.]]~~ **, and**

a gap in the region of the fuel inlet extending in the longitudinal direction of the filter housing between the at least one wall encapsulating the clean side of the filter element and the first wall of the filter housing, wherein the at least one wall encapsulating the clean side of the filter element has grooves in the side of the wall oriented toward the first side wall of the filter housing forming part of the gap for uniformly distributing fuel from the fuel inlet over the filter element to the dirty side of the filter element.

16. **(Previously presented)** The fuel filter according to claim 15, wherein the filter element comprises a folded filter material.

17. **(Previously presented)** The fuel filter according to claim 16, wherein the filter material is folded essentially into the shape of a block.

18. **(Previously presented)** The fuel filter according to claim 15, wherein the filter insert comprises an encapsulated clean side that is connected to the fuel outlet.

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19. **(Previously presented)** The fuel filter according to claim 17, wherein the filter insert comprises an encapsulated clean side that is connected to the fuel outlet.

Claims 20-24. **(Canceled)**

25. **(Currently amended)** The fuel filter according to claim 15, wherein [[at least one of]] the fuel inlet [[or]] and the fuel outlet [[is situated at an]] are provided on the same end of the filter housing.

26. **(Currently amended)** The fuel filter according to claim 25, wherein the fuel inlet and the fuel outlet are [[situated at]] provided on opposite ends of the filter housing.

27. **(Currently amended)** The fuel filter according to claim 15, further comprising [[of]] a flow entry that at least reduces turbulence in the region of the side where the flow strikes the filter element.

28. **(Previously presented)** The fuel filter according to claim 15, further comprising a flow baffle provided in the fuel inlet.

Claim 29. **(Canceled)**

30. **(Currently amended)** The fuel filter according to claim ~~[[29]]~~ **28**, wherein the flow baffle is inclined upward in relation to the flow direction.

31. **(Previously presented)** The fuel filter according to claim 15, wherein the filter housing comprises a block-shaped housing part and a cover that closes the housing part.

32. **(Previously presented)** The fuel filter according to claim 17, wherein the filter housing comprises a block-shaped housing part and a cover that closes the housing part.

33. **(Previously presented)** The fuel filter according to claim 31, wherein the housing part and the cover are connected to each other by means of a nondetachable connection.

34. **(Previously presented)** The fuel filter according to claim 15, further comprising a distribution stabilizer on the inlet side.

35. **(New)** The fuel filter as recited in claim 15, wherein the grooves in the encapsulating wall comprise a plurality of parallel longitudinal grooves and parallel transverse grooves extending at approximately right angles to one another.

36. **(New)** The fuel filter as recited in claim 15, wherein the second side wall of the filter housing slopes downward toward a water outlet and constitutes a sump for water separated out on the dirty side of the filter element.

37. **(New)** The fuel filter as recited in claim 15, wherein electrical connections for a heating unit, a temperature sensor and a water level sensor are provided on an end of the filter housing.

38. **(New)** The fuel filter as recited in claim 15, wherein the clean side of the filter element is between the first elongated surface of the flat filter element and the at least one encapsulating wall.

39. **(New)** The fuel filter as recited in claim 38, wherein the clean side of the filter element is connected via a duct segment to the fuel outlet.

40. **(New)** The fuel filter as recited in claim 15, wherein the filter element is inserted inside the filter housing via guide rails provided on the side walls.